



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Kenyan Entrepreneur Steps into Agriculture to Help Farmers Thrive



USAID/Kenya

Marion Moon (center) with local farmers who are achieving excellent results after applying organic fertilizer.

Marion Moon used to work in advertising, but never felt satisfied with her job. So, she quit and became an entrepreneur. Marion spoke at the [Global Entrepreneurship Summit](#) this week in Silicon Valley. Read her story [here](#).

A good entrepreneur sees opportunities in challenges, and that's what I was striving for when starting my business.

I faced a lot of criticism when I first jumped into the world of entrepreneurship with no real plan but a deep passion to change my country through business. Frustrated with the negativity, I traveled to Thailand to "find myself."

When I visited rural Thailand, I was struck by how much food people there gave me — whereas, when I would visit my family in rural Kenya, it was I who was taking food to them! This experience spurred my curiosity about food production and agriculture — how could we learn and be more food-secure in Kenya?

In my home country of Kenya, farmers are suffering from poor harvests due to degraded and depleted soils. Tools exist to address this challenge, but limited knowledge and access to quality fertilizers and organic matter – particularly for smallholder farmers – mean many rural Kenyan farmers continue to suffer from poor productivity, low earnings and food insecurity.

We needed something that facilitates healthy plant growth while improving soil fertility, and it needed to be affordable and available to rural farmers.

After a few more trips to Vietnam and Philippines, I discovered Plantmate Bio-Organic Fertilizer. This technology and its impact on the farmers I visited got me really excited. I started Wanda Organic Ltd. to produce Plantmate and sell it to farmers in Kenya.

Overcoming Obstacles

Starting Wanda Organic wasn't easy. I had to break many stereotypes. The biggest challenge was proving that a young, single woman who hadn't studied agriculture could introduce an advanced technology in Kenya. Many doubted the authenticity of the technology and the local registration process proved to be a steep learning curve. At several meetings I was advised to open a hair salon (something "simpler and more suited" for me) or come back with my husband as he would "better understand things."

After two and a half years, I finally attained approval to commercialize Plantmate's fertilizer in my country. I then embarked on the next phase of my business.

Introducing Plantmate to farmers was difficult as they had very limited knowledge or understanding of the soil and its key role in food production, and they were skeptical of "newcomers." This meant that we would have to spend time and resources educating farmers and getting them comfortable and familiar with our product. This was difficult because, without sufficient financing, we were unable to reach many farmers. Support from Feed the Future helped me turn my [idea into action](#) by providing funding and technical assistance.

With this funding and assistance, I began testing affordable bio-organic fertilizer with rural farmers to demonstrate its viability for the Kenyan market. I began with a farmer named Naomi, and together we tested the fertilizer on various food crops she grew. Her harvest increased threefold, and she couldn't help but share this exciting news with her peers. I appointed her and two other farmers as "Wanda Ambassadors" to help market the fertilizer.

From there, I set up demonstration plots and conducted peer-to-peer exchange visits across counties, selecting nearly 500 farmers to test the product. I created groups among these farmers to assess each other's farms and share knowledge and experience on agricultural best practices. I produced simple and well-illustrated informational materials on the proper use of the fertilizer as well as merchandise to help popularize it.

Growing Impact

Today, Wanda Organic works in seven counties in Kenya and is a household name among rural farmers. By using Plantmate, farmers have increased their yields more than 30 percent and are spending 20 percent less on crop inputs due to the fertilizer's efficacy. The improved productivity has increased the value of smallholder farmers' sales by nearly 50 percent.

These farmers can now afford nutritious foods and health care and are sending their children to school. Wanda is a Swahili word that means "thriving bush." By promoting affordable bio-organic fertilizer to rural Kenya farmers, Wanda Organic is not only helping crops thrive but is helping the farming families that tend them reduce hunger and poverty.

Running my own business provides me with a source of income, but the most rewarding part of being an "agropreneur" is helping rural Kenyan farmers and their families improve their lives. I now have a satisfaction in my job that I never had in advertising. I'm able to create economic opportunities and give back to communities. And I'm working to reach more farming families. While I currently import and market Plantmate Organic Fertilizer, I plan to establish local production facilities in Kenya and parts of East Africa.

By bringing the innovation closer to home, I'm hoping more African farmers will be able to benefit from bio-organic fertilizers to boost their yields, protect our country's soil, and live healthy and productive lives.

As the U.S. Government's global hunger and food security initiative, [Feed the Future](#) helps empower agricultural entrepreneurs like Marion Moon in developing countries with the resources, connections and skills they need to take their ideas and passion and turn them into thriving businesses that reduce poverty, hunger and malnutrition in rural areas.